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Paul, Ortiz meet with Transportation Secretary Mineta

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Texas Gulf coast Congressmen Ron Paul and Solomon P. Ortiz organized a meeting last week between South Texas shrimpers and federal Transportation secretary Norman Mineta to discuss onerous immigration requirements that prevent adequate crewing of boats. Mineta promised Paul and the shrimpers that the Coast Guard (which enforces federal fishery regulations) is working on a temporary waiver process to help with crewing for the July opening of the fishery. The Guard also is working on a permanent waiver process. I'm pleased that Secretary Mineta is open to relaxing these harmful regulations," Paul stated. "When shrimpers cannot hire adequate crews, the whole industry suffers. My hope is that temporary waivers can be granted by July." Currently, federal regulations require that 75% of shrimping crews be citizens or permanent legal residents. The Coast Guard has been strictly enforcing the 75% rule, leaving shrimpers able to hire only limited temporary workers.